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CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ON, INTER ALIA, OCEANS, SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, TOURISM AND CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

Note by the Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

1. The present note contains the major elements of the contribution by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, on, inter alia, oceans, small island developing States, tourism and consumption and production patterns.

I. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND USE OF OCEANS AND COASTAL AREAS

A. Background

2. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, which deals with the protection of oceans and coastal areas and use of their resources, explicitly recognizes that the oceans and adjacent coastal areas form an integrated whole; that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the international basis upon which to pursue the protection and sustainable development of the marine

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and coastal environment and its resources; and that new approaches to marine and coastal area management and development are required that are integrated in content and precautionary and anticipatory in ambit.

3. Since the adoption of Agenda 21, and in the spirit of Rio, considerable further progress has been made in strengthening international efforts in the sustainable management and use of oceans and coastal areas and, to that end, a number of international instruments have been concluded and global programmes developed.

B. Role and actions of UNEP in facilitating the implementation of chapter 17

4. The regional seas programme, initiated in 1974, remains the central programme providing the major legal, administrative, substantive and financial framework for implementation of Agenda 21 and its chapter 17 in particular. While the initial focus of the regional seas programme was on the protection of the marine environment against pollution, it subsequently shifted towards the development and protection of the marine and coastal environment through improved management. This evolution prompted UNEP to assume one of the lead roles in promoting the concept of integrated coastal zone management.

5. Further contributions to the implementation of chapter 17 are made by UNEP through a number of its programme elements and through programmes and agreements for which UNEP acts as the secretariat or coordinator.

C. State of the environment and trends in regard to oceans and coastal areas

6. Over the past decade, notwithstanding some notable successes in addressing problems caused by certain specific forms of marine pollution, and more generalized successes in improving the environmental quality of coastal areas in some geographical areas, the degradation of the oceans, coastal areas, and their resources has continued and, in many places, even intensified.

7. It is now recognized that the main driving force of the problems is ill-planned coastal social and economic development. This awareness has led to a series of policy decisions, launching of new research, observation and management programmes, a shift in the focus of action from sectoral to intersectoral approaches and the consideration of marine affairs as an integral part of coastal social and economic development.

D. Major future environmental challenges and priority issues for oceans and coastal areas

8. A reduction in the impact of various land-based activities is the most urgent problem. Coastal urbanization, industrial development, drainage basin modifications, commerce and transport, tourism, agriculture, forestry and aquaculture are among the most important activities affecting the marine and coastal environment. To address those problems, it is now generally recognized that conventional sectoral approaches must be replaced by a cross-sectoral, or holistic, integrated coastal zone management (ICZM).

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9. ICZM must also include management of river basins and groundwater systems associated with coastal zones. In spite of their obvious ecological, economic and social interdependence, the need for adopting drainage basins as units of ICZM is still not adequately recognized.

10. Aside from obstacles of a political nature, the effectiveness of ICZM may be constrained in many countries by the lack of funding, both for capital projects and for the initiation of certain activities, or the lack of relevant managerial or technical skills. The importance of these constraints cannot be overemphasized.

E. Proposal for future UNEP actions to address the environmental challenges of chapter 17

11. UNEP should strengthen the regional seas programme as its central mechanism for the implementation of UNEP activities relevant to chapter 17. In the framework of this programme, UNEP should stimulate the implementation of activities identified in six programmes areas of chapter 17, specifically:

(a) Integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas, by measures to promote, inter alia, the integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas and associated river-basins as the overarching principle governing the activities of the programme; to promote the establishment of regional commissions for sustainable development; and to assist countries in strengthening their institutional structures, legal instruments and manpower capabilities needed for ICZM, including through facilitating access to, and transfer of, environmentally sound technologies;

(b) Marine environmental protection, by appropriate technical, administrative and legal measures contributing to the improved protection of the marine and coastal environment; by facilitating and guiding the assessment of the state of the marine and coastal environment; and by preventing the degradation of the marine environment from land-based and sea-based activities;

(c) Sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources under national jurisdiction, through closer cooperation between the programme and mechanisms and bodies dealing with fisheries and through measures for the improved protection of endangered species, fragile ecosystems, habitats and other ecologically sensitive areas and for the restoration of damaged systems and areas;

(d) Addressing critical uncertainties for the management of the marine environment and climate change, by strengthening and expanding the ongoing research, monitoring and observation activities undertaken within the framework of the programme; by strengthening international, including regional, cooperation and coordination; and by preparing and convening, possibly in 2000, a joint meeting of the representatives of the governing bodies of the regional components of the programme, to review overall progress in the programme and to determine ways and means of enhancing its contribution to the global protection of the marine and coastal environment through regional and interregional cooperation; and

(e) Sustainable development of small islands, by pursuing the specific goals of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in all appropriate regions covered by the regional seas programmes.

12. UNEP will also explore the need and possibility for expansion of the regional seas programme to geographical areas currently not covered by the programme.

13. In addition, in order to further the principles and goals of chapter 17, UNEP will continue contributing to the implementation of Agenda 21, through ongoing UNEP programme elements and activities; through programmes and conventions for which UNEP acts as secretariat, coordinator or lead agency; and through the Global Environment Facility (GEF), by, inter alia, coordinating the implementation of GEF-supported projects for which UNEP has assumed direct responsibility, such as the global international water assessment.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

A. Background

14. Most small island developing States are located within the tropics and are small, low lying, sandy and infertile, densely populated and poorly endowed with resources and opportunities for land-based development. In addition, they tend to be characterized by a physically fragile environment; high dependence on foreign development assistance; high level of urban unemployment and rural under-employment; extremely vulnerable undiversified economies; and, in some cases, substantial rates of outward population migration resulting in critical losses of skills to the economy.

15. Small island developing States are known for their rich biological diversity and the high degree of endemism. At the same time, this biological diversity is extremely fragile. Approximately 75 per cent of the documented animal extinctions since 1600 have occurred on non-continental islands and another 3,000 species are known to be threatened. Maintaining the biological diversity of small island developing States is, therefore, globall important and merits particular attention.

16. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 identifies the sustainable development of small islands as one of the programme areas where new approaches for management and development are required at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

17. The small size, isolation and relative paucity of resources are not, however, the only factors rendering the environment and social and economic development of small island developing States particularly vulnerable. in addition, most such States are located in geographical areas where they are exposed to periodic hostile environmental conditions and events and the predicted consequences of climate change will further increase their vulnerability. Although tourism currently represents a major economic sector, the vastness of seas surrounding small island developing States is,

in the long term, probably their major, if not their only, comparative advantage over the continental countries. The wealth contained in their exclusive economic zones is considerable, albeit largely underutilized.

18. These factors seriously limit the sustainable development options of small island developing States and endanger their rich and diverse cultures. Accordingly, their continuing development will critically depend on full exploitation of the comparative advantages offered by their unique coastal and marine resources, including their rich biodiversity, and effective adaptation to global environmental change.

19. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1994 adopted the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and identified fifteen priority areas for action. The United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development assumed the coordinating role for the implementation of the Programme of Action.

B. Past and current action by UNEP to facilitate the environmental aspects of the Barbados Programme of Action

20. The 1994 Conference which adopted the Barbados Programme of Action recognized the role of UNEP in providing policy guidance and coordination in the field of environment, including with regard to small island developing States. Special attention in the implementation of the Programme of Action was focused by UNEP on promoting efficient protection of resources through integrated island management programmes, including in most cases the totality of the islands' terrestrial environment, its coastline and the adjacent exclusive economic zones.

21. In several regions, regional action plans have been adopted for the implementation of the Programme of Action. In addition, national and regional project proposals are under preparation, with a view to their submission for consideration at a meeting of donors, planned to be organized with the assistance of UNEP in February 1999.

22. Assistance is being provided by UNEP to small island developing States in preparing their regional position papers for submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session. In addition, an ecological vulnerability index is being formulated, to assess the ecological fragility of small island developing States.

23. UNEP also contributed to activities in specific priority areas, including: integrated water management; climate change and sea-level rise; management of wastes; biological resources and biodiversity; science and technology; national institutions and administrative capacity; tourism; and implementation, monitoring and review.

C. State of the environment and trends since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action

24. As noted above, the environment of small island developing States is particularly vulnerable and there are numerous impediments to their social and economic development. Prominent among these problems are deforestation

and forest degradation, which are on the increase, and the replacement, under population and economic pressures, of the traditional and environmentally friendly systems of subsistence agriculture by more intensive and unsustainable exploitation.

25. Modification of coastal and marine ecosystems is of particular concern. Ecologically important coastal habitats are increasingly being reduced by land-reclamation schemes, unsustainable exploitation, and the development of aquaculture. Degradation and loss of coral reefs is widespread.

26. The decline and loss of some fisheries resources, both in coastal waters and the adjacent exclusive economic zones, is far advanced, as a result of overfishing or fishing with inappropriate methods, compounded by the technical inability of most small island developing States to control the foreign fishing fleets illegally operating in their exclusive economic zones.

27. Aquaculture in many small island developing States is growing in importance as a substitute for proteins previously provided by traditional fishing, but so are its negative environmental effects.

28. Although some small island developing States have set aside a considerable part of their territory, including coastal waters, as specially protected areas, in most other such States the extent of such areas is almost negligible. In addition, pollution from human, industrial and agricultural wastes, including the pollution of scarce island freshwater resources, is on the increase.

29. In addition to their high vulnerability to global climate change and sea-level rise, small island developing States are, by their geographical location, exposed to frequent major natural disasters, frequently of near-catastrophic proportions.

D. Major future environmental challenges for small island developing States

30. In many instances, the current national development plans of small island developing States do not consider their development priorities in the context of constraints posed by environmental conditions. Accordingly, a better integration of economic goals and environmental concerns should be achieved at national levels, in order to ensure the protection and sustainable use of environmental resources.

31. The information base on the status of natural resources and on the trends in the changes of these resources is still generally inadequate for small island developing States. A continuous assessment of the state of the environment and of social and economic forces driving the environmental changes would have to be strengthened as an indispensable tool in national decision-making processes.

32. Other necessary measures to address the environmental problems of small island developing States should be implemented in such areas as, inter alia, appropriate waste management; the impacts of tourism development; climate change and sea-level rise in general; shortage of freshwater; degradation and loss of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems and habitats; and the unsustainable use of biological resources.

D. Proposed future UNEP actions to address the environmental challenges facing small island developing States

33. UNEP, in cooperation with the organizations supporting the Programme of Action and, whenever appropriate, using the relevant regional components of the regional seas programme will continue contributing to the implementation of the Programme of Action through the activities identified above.

34. Particular attention will be paid to promoting efficient protection and use of resources through integrated island management programmes, including in most cases the totality of an island's terrestrial environment, its coastline and the adjacent exclusive economic zone, by:

(a) Supporting the monitoring and assessment of the state of the environment of small island developing States;

(b) Assisting countries in the development or strengthening of their economic and legal instruments, including appropriate guidelines for improved protection and sustainable use of their resources through integrated island management programmes;

(c) Promoting transfer and facilitating access to scientific information and advice on technical means and technologies appropriate to small island developing States;

(d) Training, capacity-building, institutional strengthening, awareness-raising and other measures, inter alia, to develop the capacity of small island developing States for the implementation of integrated island management programmes.

III. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

A. Background

35. With more than 260 million employees and annual investments in capital projects of more than $800 billion, tourism ranks alongside such sectors as construction and petrochemicals as one of the world's biggest industries. Current estimates are that tourism accounts for about 10.7 per cent of the world gross domestic product (GDP) and the sector is growing rapidly. Tourism therefore has an important economic role, and can contribute significantly to social and economic development and conservation.

36. Tourism also has important environmental impacts resulting from resource consumption, as well as from pollution, wastes and the effects of transport. At the same time, beaches and mountains, rivers, forests and biodiversity make the environment a basic resource upon which the tourism industry depends to thrive and grow; and threats to the environment also threaten the viability of the tourism industry. It therefore makes good business sense for the tourism industry to operate in an environmentally sound manner. The goal of sustainable tourism is to minimize the negative and maximize the positive impacts.

37. Sustainable tourism is tourism that puts sustainable development into practice in its development, management and integration with the wider economy, society and the environment. It includes the participation of local communities in tourism and ensures that they have an equitable share in its benefits, so as to protect the quality of human and natural environments and resources on which tourism depends; and it operates within natural capacities for the regeneration and future productivity of natural resources.

38. The goal of the proposed UNEP principles for the implementation of sustainable tourism is to catalyse appropriate actions by the many actors involved in tourism. The proposed principles consolidate guidelines that are already available into a coherent set of key principles to guide stakeholders in the development and implementation of sustainable tourism.

39. In particular, the proposed UNEP principles for the implementation of sustainable tourism are set out:

(a) To provide a coherent framework for more specific guidelines to be prepared by the various conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the regional seas action plans and other international agreements that already address, or will address, tourism issues;

(b) To help Governments and intergovernmental, private-sector and other organizations in applying the general concept of sustainable tourism in practice, and in minimizing environmental impacts from tourism.

40. The proposed principles are supported by the proposed UNEP work programme on sustainable tourism. This work programme builds on activities already developed by UNEP, in particular by the UNEP Industry and Environment Office.

B. Proposed UNEP principles for the implementation of sustainable tourism

Principle 1: Integration of tourism into the overall policy for sustainable development

41. Principle 1 shall cover, inter alia, national strategies, interagency coordination and cooperation, integrated management and measures to reconcile conflicting resource uses between tourism and other activities.

Principle 2: Development of sustainable tourism

42. Principle 2 shall cover, inter alia, planning for development and land-use at the subnational level, environmental impact assessments, planning measures, the development of an effective legislative framework for the tourism sector, environmental standards to protect the environment and regional standards to ensure that tourism and the environment are mutually supportive at a regional level.

Principle 3: Management of tourism

43. Principle 3 shall cover, inter alia, initiatives by industry, the monitoring and review of tourism activities, the promotion of environmentally sound technologies for tourism, measures to monitor compliance and enforcement activities.

Principle 4: Conditions for success

44. Principle 4 shall cover, inter alia, the involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of tourism plans and information exchange between Government and all stakeholders.

Principle 5: Capacity-building

45. Principle 5 shall cover, inter alia, measures to ensure the effective implementation of sustainable tourism, in general, and of these principles in particular, through capacity-building programmes to develop and strengthen human resources and institutional capacities in government at national and local levels, and among local communities.

C. Proposed UNEP work programme on sustainable tourism for the 2000-2001 biennium

46. The proposed UNEP work programme on sustainable tourism builds on activities that have already been developed by UNEP, in particular by the UNEP Industry and Environment Office. It is aimed at providing tools to assist Governments and the tourism industry to promote best practice in the tourism sector, and appropriate development and management of tourism in sensitive areas. It is designed to support the proposed UNEP principles for the implementation of sustainable tourism, and to put into a coherent framework the specific guidelines relating to tourism that are being prepared by the various Conventions.

47. The proposed work programme will be carried out in cooperation with other international organizations, in particular with the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and through dialogue with all those involved in tourism development, operation and management - governments at national and local level, the private sector and institutions financing tourism.

Work programme element 1: Improve assessment of environmental impacts

48. Element 1 will include activities to assess the impact of environmental threats on the tourism industry.

Work programme element 2: Raise awareness and build capacity of the tourism industry by providing information on sustainable tourism

49. Element 2 will include activities to promote environmentally sound technologies and best practices for tourism, environmental management systems in the tourism industry and measures to address new sectors in the tourism industry, such as sports facilities and the environment.

Work programme element 3: Launch the "UNEP tourism initiative" to assist the tourism industry in implementing sustainable solutions

50. Element 3 will include activities, inter alia, to initiate contacts with leading tourism companies, to lay the groundwork for the "UNEP tourism initiative" and to draft codes of conduct and guidelines.

Work programme element 4: Build public authorities' capacity by assisting them and providing information

51. Element 4 will be concerned inter alia, with the costs and benefits of tourism development; the application of green accounting; the use of economic incentives to promote sustainable tourism; and support for local authorities in destination management, including training in and the management of World Heritage Sites.

Work programme element 5: Change consumption patterns in the tourism sector

52. Element 5 will be concerned with consumption patterns of both suppliers and consumers in the tourism industry.

IV. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

A. Background

53. UNEP commenced its work on issues related to cleaner production - subsequently enlarged to cover the broader theme of sustainable production and consumption - in 1989, at the request of the Governing Council, which, by its decision 15/37 of 25 May 1989, requested UNEP to continue its catalytic role to promote, with Governments, industry, research organizations and other relevant institutions, the establishment of a network which would allow the transfer of environment protection strategies.

54. By its decision 16/33 of 31 May 1991, the Governing Council referred to the "transfer of environmentally sound industrial production technology", and called on UNEP to develop further the cleaner production programme in this regard, including the fostering of transfer of technologies and management tools that reduced emissions at source and conserved raw materials and energy.

55. The programme was launched at the first international high-level cleaner production seminar, held in September 1990 in Canterbury, hosted by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

56. Subsequently UNEP provided input to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, as a result of which the cleaner production concept was incorporated in Agenda 21, in particular in chapter 4, on changing consumption patterns, and chapter 30, on strengthening the role of business and industry. Many other chapters also support the cleaner production concept through specific recommendations.

57. The high-level seminar in Paris hosted by the French Government in 1992, just after the Earth Summit, stressed the need for more industry participation in the growing network and the concept of National Cleaner Production Centres was suggested as a vehicle to catalyse national programmes on training, demonstration, policy advice and information dissemination.

58. In 1993, by its decision 17/17 of 21 May 1993, the Governing Council noted progress by the programme, and asked UNEP to address the issues of technology transfer by examining the possibility of elaborating guidelines concerning necessary information to be provided by technologies.

59. As part of its catalytic role in national capacity-building within the UN system, UNEP joined with UNIDO in 1994 in launching the first group of national cleaner production centres in Brazil, China, Czech Republic, India, Mexico, Slovakia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, subsequently joined by Tunisia and Hungary in 1996, and Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and VietNam in 1998. Following the same model, other centres sponsored by bilateral agencies were established in other countries.

60. By its decision 18/23 of 26 May 1995, the Governing Council noted with appreciation the progress made in promoting cleaner and safer production, called upon funding agencies to take the issue into account in their financing programmes, requested UNEP to proceed with drafting guidelines on environmental information needed in relation to technology export.

61. The sustainable production and consumption programme is supported in part by the Environment Fund, and in part by counterpart contributions from Governments, The European Commission, and in-kind contributions of personnel and meeting support by the governments of Australia, Denmark, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. A number of industry associations and companies from all parts of the world are also involved in the programme.

B. Achievements and remaining challenges

62. The sustainable production and consumption programme has made significant progress over the years since its inception. Its main achievements to date include the following:

(a) Better definition of the cleaner production concept and its relationship to similar concepts promoted by other organizations such as eco-efficiency, green productivity, pollution prevention, etc.;

(b) Creation of a greater global awareness of the principles and applicability of cleaner production, and the roles of different industrial and governmental bodies to promote them;

(c) More effective level of information exchange on cleaner technologies via the international cleaner production information clearing-house (ICPIC), now available on the Internet;

(d) Establishment of international networks of cleaner production experts and organizations involved in cleaner production, including the functioning of working groups in various industry sectors, and maintaining and updating publication on cleaner production information sources;

(e) Wider use around the world of cleaner production diagnostic and management tools by national organizations and institutes, and an increased capacity of individual countries through the establishment of national cleaner production centres, and other bilateral assistance programmes catalysed by the UNEP programme;

(f) Launching of the International Declaration on Cleaner Production in 1998 as a way of enlisting further global support, and to define more concrete means of implementation; and

(g) Increased interagency cooperation on cleaner production.

63. The remaining challenges to a full adoption of cleaner production include:

(a) Further raising of general awareness of the advantages and options in cleaner production, especially by small and medium size enterprises, through greater use of the electronic media, conference presentations and training workshops;

(b) Increasing the involvement of the banking sector in realizing cleaner production investments;

(c) Encouraging greater incorporation of sustainable and consumption as key learning items in the undergraduate training of professionals in all countries, by engaging the formal tertiary education sector in a stronger dialogue on curriculum change in institutions;

(d) Catalysing a stronger move from awareness to action by the various stakeholders and partners in cleaner production through demonstration and pilot projects, and by encouraging benchmarking among cleaner production programmes and centres; and

(e) Further examining the underlying factors and driving forces for the transfer of outdated technologies, and to develop further information exchanges in this regard.

C. Proposed UNEP work programme on sustainable production and consumption for the 2000-2001 biennium

40. The sustainable production and consumption subprogramme element of the UNEP programme of work should address the remaining challenges outlined above, and adapt to the changing environmental context. The shift in focus involves two aspects in particular:

(a) Stronger move to implementation through the use of new environmental management instruments to support cleaner production, with emphasis also on financial mechanisms to promote cleaner production investments;

(b) Greater focus on upstream aspects of product life-cycle, with particular attention on promoting sustainable consumption patterns.

41. The future programme of activities would therefore include the following elements:

(a) Fostering effective implementation of the cleaner production approach, in particular by:

(i) Using the Cleaner Production Declaration as leverage in further awareness-raising, and capacity-building to strengthen existing programmes and reach out to new audiences;

(ii) Further development and capacity-building on the use of environmental management tools, including environmental reporting and benchmarking;

(iii) Further emphasis on environmental technology assessment as a way of improving technology choices in developing countries;

(b) Improving the financing mechanisms for cleaner production investments through the launch of a major programme in 1998 - 2000 (funded by the Government of Norway), including pilot and demonstration studies in a studies in a number of countries where cleaner production programmes need to be strengthened;

(c) Further study of economic instruments and voluntary measures to complement traditional regulatory instruments;

(d) Activities concerning sustainable consumption, in particular to focus on consumption patterns and the supply-chain management in industry, and to build a broader worldwide dialogue on consumption patter issues generally;

(e) UNEP initiative with the advertizing and marketing sectors, to define their role in moving to more sustainable consumption patters.